

Remarks

Claims 1-25 are pending in the present application. By the present amendment, claims 1, 3, 6, 13, and 25 have been amended. Reconsideration of all pending claims in light of the amendments made thereto and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claim 1 has been rejected as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,350,097 to Mitchell. Claim 1 has been amended to recite a work-piece transfer system for use with a tool for processing a work-piece at low pressure that includes first and second isolation load locks positioned next to one another and housed within a load lock housing. The load lock housing includes two load lock access openings facing a higher pressure region at different angles to allow each of the first and second load locks to be accessed from two different directions.

Applicant's representative can find no teaching or suggestion in Mitchell for a load lock housing that houses two load locks and has two load lock access openings facing a higher pressure region at different angles. Such a load lock would be unnecessary in Mitchell because it appears that a single in air robot accesses the load lock from the atmospheric side, meaning that the load lock is accessed from only a single direction. For at least these reasons, claim 1 is neither taught nor suggested by the cited references and therefore claim 1 and its dependent claims 2-5 are in condition for allowance.

Claim 3 has been amended to remove elements that were imported into claim 1 by the present amendment.

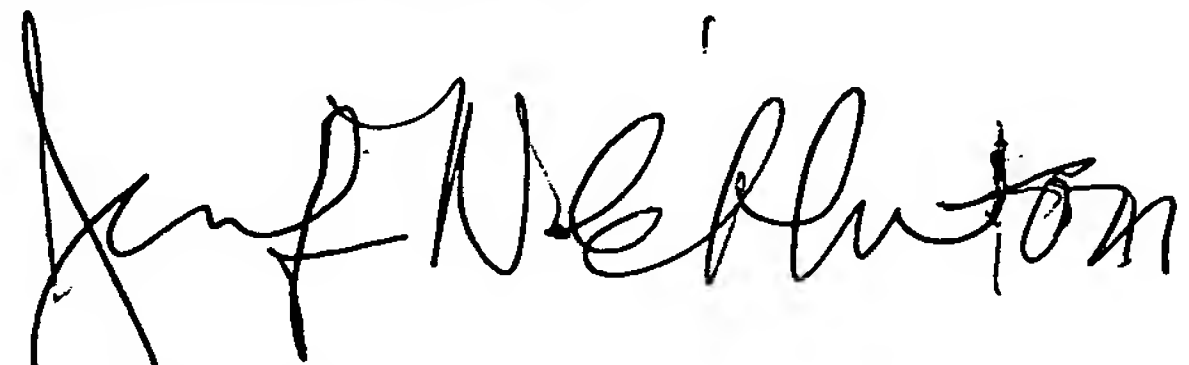
Claim 6 has been rejected as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,405,230 to Ono in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,024,800 to Soejima. Claim 6 has been amended to recite a work-piece transfer apparatus for treating work-pieces in a low pressure region that includes two adjacent work-piece isolation load locks, each load lock including two access openings for selectively communicating atmospheric pressure to a load lock interior. The two access openings confront the region of atmospheric pressure at different angles. Multiple other robots are positioned in the atmospheric region for transferring work-pieces to and from the load locks. Each of the multiple other robots is aligned with at least one of the access openings.

Applicant's representative can find no teaching or suggestion of a load lock housing having two access openings that confront the atmospheric region at different angles in Ono, which appears to include two load locks each with a single access opening to atmosphere (Figure 12). Socjima does not cure this deficiency. It appears that in Socjima a single access opening confronts the atmospheric region. For at least these reasons, claim 6 and its dependent claims 7-12 are in condition for allowance.

Claims 13 and 25 have been rejected as anticipated by Mitchell. Claims 13 and 25 have been amended in a manner analogous to the amendment to claim 1 and therefore claim 13 and its dependent claims 14-24 and claim 25 are in condition for allowance for reasons similar to those discussed in connection with claim 1.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any required fee under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17 in connection with this communication to our Deposit Account No. 23-0630.

Respectfully submitted,



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